

OTHER IMPORTANT PRIORITIES

Performance audits for state agencies (HB 1053) – Citizens need to perform their jobs well and the same requirement should apply to state agencies. I’m supporting legislation to create a performance grading system for state agencies backed by independent audits done by the State Auditor. We passed this reform in the House last year, but I’ll now work to pass it in the Senate.

Tax incentives for solar energy (HB 2445) – Clean, renewable solar energy is good for the environment and helps balance energy supplies to avoid sharp price spikes like we saw a couple of years ago. The tax incentives I’m sponsoring will not only promote clean energy, they’ll help Washington manufacturers stay on the cutting-edge of this emerging industry.

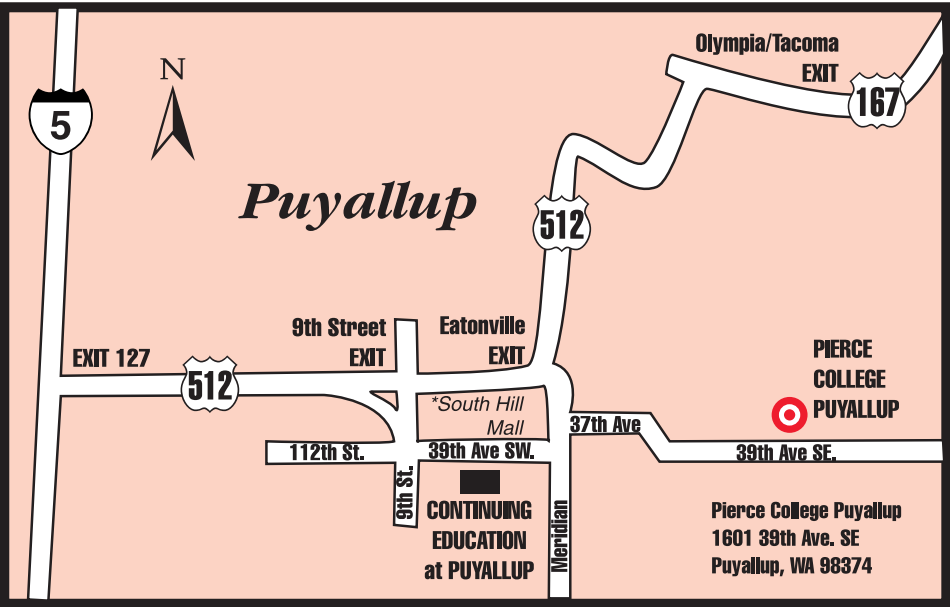
Setting the standard for energy efficiency (HB 2333) – Hydroelectric power makes up more than 71 percent of the electricity sold in our state, with coal, nuclear power and other sources making up the difference. This legislation requires electric utility companies to incrementally increase use of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power. It also directs utilities to strive for energy-saving targets. Efficiency standards and renewable energy benefits both consumers and our environment!

TOWN HALL MEETING!

Please join Sen. Jim Kastama and me for a town hall meeting on 2004 issues. We’ll report on the progress of the legislative session and, more importantly, listen to what you have to say about the issues facing our communities and state.

- When:**
February 21st
2:00 to 3:30 p.m.
- Where:**
Pierce College Puyallup
1601 39th Ave. SE, Puyallup, WA 98374
Brouillet Library Science Building - Lecture Hall, L244
Signs will be posted from parking lot.

We hope to see you there!



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Special
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Dear Friends,

The 2004 session has started with a refreshing lack of political bickering and a feeling of optimism. This is great news. Our state needs forward-looking leadership and a spirit of cooperation if we hope to take the next steps towards improving our economy, our schools and colleges, and our health care system.

The session may be young, but with a short, 60-day session, everyone is running full-throttle. Many of you have been asking about my work on providing property-tax relief for seniors. I’m very excited my proposal (HB 2436) earned the support of 28 Democratic and Republican co-sponsors! Your calls, letters and e-mails have helped me convince legislators that this bill is important to constituents.

House legislators are also working hard on our supplemental budget and further improving the state’s economy. Unlike last year at this time, our economy is growing, our state budget is balanced and the transportation and prescription-drug reforms we created are beginning to make a difference in people’s lives. But we’re not finished – every conversation I have with workers, business owners, teachers and parents reminds me that you expect even stronger leadership in Olympia.

With that in mind, I’d like to share with you some of my priorities and legislation I’m working on. As always, I welcome your input and ideas. Hearing from you helps me represent you!

Best wishes,
Dawn Morrell
Dawn Morrell
State Representative, 25th District

Representative Dawn Morrell

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Investing in WA Business (HB 2346) – People need good jobs and businesses need investments to grow. I’m proposing that the Washington State Investment Board increase its efforts to find prudent pension-fund investments in start-up and emerging growth businesses in our own state.

Regulatory reform to help business – I was disappointed that Gov. Locke vetoed two bills I supported last session (HB 1530, HB 1531) to help businesses by easing regulatory burdens. I will urge my fellow lawmakers to pass similar legislation and, if necessary, override a veto. One reform requires the governor to sign significant rules impacting business before the rule goes into effect. The other makes it easier for business owners to challenge government rules without having to travel to Olympia.

B&O tax relief for small businesses (HB 2691) – Small business owners who are struggling to succeed should qualify for a B&O tax exemption if they are not yet making a profit. I believe we need more tax relief for small businesses, which supply most of the jobs in our state.

No state jobs sent overseas (HB 2405) – Did you know some state agencies have contracted with workers in foreign nations to do state work (such as phone services)? That’s not right when we need to grow jobs here. I’m sponsoring legislation to require state contracts for services to be performed by people in the United States.

EDUCATION

Improving transfers to four-year schools (HB 2437) – Because most of our state universities limit the number of credits that can be transferred from a two-year school, some students who transfer to a four-year college have to re-take classes or lose credits. This is a costly and time-consuming restriction. I’ve introduced legislation student transfers easier, quicker and less costly. It would also save state tax dollars.

Simple majority for schools (HJR 4204) – Communities who want to support their schools want the right to pass levies with a simple majority vote – like other initiatives and elections. My proposal would submit a constitutional amendment on the simple majority question to a vote of the people – you’ll decide whether school levies should continue to require a 60-percent supermajority, or whether a simple majority should be put in place.



HEALTH CARE

Access to school nurses (HB 2763) – Parents and kids need school nurses to treat injuries and emergencies, monitor immunizations, evaluate hearing and vision, and detect other health threats before children suffer irreversible harm. I’m sponsoring legislation to ensure that all school districts meet state guideline for school nurse access within five years.

Affordable medicine from Canada (HB 2469) – It doesn’t make sense that state agencies must buy medicines only from U.S. drug manufacturers when the exact same drug can often be bought in Canada at half the cost – or less! My taxpayer-friendly proposal authorizes state agencies to buy prescription medicines from Canada if they are safe, of equal quality, and less expensive.



PUBLIC SAFETY

Protecting against domestic violence (HB 2392, HB 2397) – The Crystal Brame tragedy in Pierce County awakened lawmakers and citizens to gaps in our domestic violence laws. I’m sponsoring legislation to strengthen coordination and accountability of law enforcement agencies to reduce officer-involved domestic violence. Another measure allows courts to assess a fine on persons convicted of domestic violence to help fund domestic violence prevention.



Cracking down on meth labs (HB 2844) – Pierce County and our state generally are battling a methamphetamine epidemic. The State Patrol says stronger penalties for people who buy enormous quantities of ephedrine and other ingredients of meth production would help us reduce meth crimes. I’m advocating a bill to get tough on these ingredients and prevent more meth labs.

HELPING DOCTORS HELP THEIR PATIENTS

Soaring malpractice insurance costs are creating a crisis for doctors, hospitals and patients – and driving up health insurance costs for businesses and everyone else. As a critical care nurse, I see the terrible effects this crisis is having on emergency rooms and vital specialties ranging from brain surgery to delivering babies. We need solutions now.

I worked on a package of more than a dozen specific reforms to address the malpractice insurance crisis. Highlights of the package, which our governor and insurance commissioner support, include reforms to:

- **Increase patient safety** by funding proven strategies to reduce medical errors and by creating financial incentives for doctors to practice in high-need areas.
- **Control rising malpractice insurance premiums** with measures that include a patient-compensation fund to protect doctors against unaffordable settlements or judgments while ensuring fairness for patients.
- **Improve our civil justice system.** For example, one reform would require arbitration or mediation before cases go to trial. Another step requires a study of possible state guidelines for juries to use when determining awards for non-economic damages (such as pain and suffering). Another option is to require a certificate of merit before a case goes to trial, to prevent frivolous suits from clogging our system.

This issue is complicated and it’s impossible for me to say that any one answer will make things right for both patients and doctors. I’ll continue listening and working towards creative solutions. I believe a comprehensive approach that protects patients, provides relief for doctors and improves our civil justice system is best if we want effective, long-term reform.



State Representative
Dawn Morrell

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